

\$4 million ice arena to be built along Cedar River

■ Waterloo family's donation makes construction of the 58,000-square-foot facility possible.

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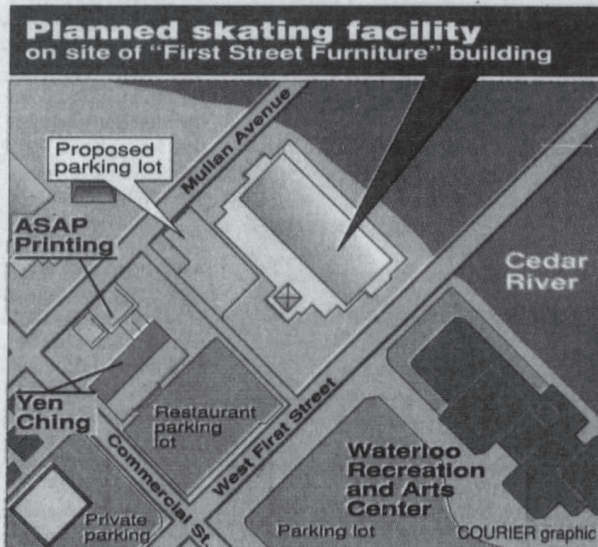
A \$4.15 million ice arena and event center will be constructed on the banks of the Cedar River downtown over the coming year and a half in what is expected to be one of the biggest recreational and economic boosts for the area in more than a decade.

The 58,000-square-foot facility will be built between West First Street and West Mullan Avenue, in the north half of the block immediately west of the Waterloo Recreation & Arts Center.

The project is largely the result of a major donation by the Young family of Waterloo, which owns the land and will construct the building and donate it to the city. Work is expected to begin about June 1 and be completed in the summer of 1994.

Also, ice user groups in Waterloo have committed to raising \$600,000 for ice equipment.

The city of Waterloo will be asked to commit about \$700,000, which could be spread over a number of years and include the \$80,000 a year now spent on subsidizing ice



Rendering courtesy of Thorson Brom Broshar Snyder Architects

in McElroy Auditorium. Waterloo City Clerk-Auditor Larry Burger said the City Council may be asked to issue bonds to initially cover the city's commitment, which could be paid off with rev-

enues from rental of the arena for skating events and non-ice programs. City officials estimate the arena will more than pay for itself.

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The arena could be used for a wide range of non-ice events, including graduations, concerts, wrestling and basketball camps and tournaments, and indoor soccer.

"It's a dream come true" for ice users and the city, Waterloo Recreation & Arts Commission Director Dean Myhr said. "All of us have been looking at this possibility for 14 years. It's hard to comprehend it's really going to happen."

The arena would have a 100-by-200-foot, Olympic-size skating area with a seating capacity of 2,900, which could be expanded to 5,400 seats for non-ice events such as high school graduations.

Myhr said the skating area would be larger than the surface at McElroy, wider in dimension and, to local officials' knowledge, the only Olympic-size rink in Iowa. He said McElroy has a seating capacity of about 7,400 for ice events.

Ice users were briefed on the plans earlier this week. "We were almost like kids in a candy store," said attorney Dave Tyler, president of the U.S. Hockey League and a member of the ice users group.

Details of the ice users' fund-raising efforts have not yet been worked out, Tyler said. "That's a major challenge for the ice-using community to come up with. But when you look at the fact that we've never had this opportunity before for something so worthwhile ... I think the community will respond."

The facility would have a weight room and a public running-jogging track around the upper concourse that would have a view of the Cedar River.

Myhr and Assistant Recreation Commission Director Tom Reardon said the interior would be comparable to a smaller version of Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City, in which the public enters the building onto the upper concourse with seating and the arena floor below.

The arena, located between First and Mullan, would be between the northbound and southbound lanes of Highway 63, providing easy access.

The arena would house several of the ice programs now offered at McElroy Auditorium. City officials have been hoping to replace the 30-year-old ice-making equipment there and build a new facility.

The air-conditioned arena conceivably could have ice nine months of the year, Myhr and Reardon said. And operation costs of the new, energy-efficient building would be significantly lower than present costs at McElroy.

Revenues from rental of the ice and the arena, concessions and user fees would pay for the arena's operation, Myhr and Reardon said. They also would free up McElroy for events that may now be a conflict to schedule due to the ice. The arena may even make money under current projections.

Myhr and Reardon said the arena would complement existing facilities such as McElroy, The Five Sullivan Brothers Convention Center and the UNI-Dome.

They emphasized that the arena would be a "family" recreation area, providing facilities not now available for new and expanded programs for the general public, including young people.

The walking-jogging area would be available to seniors and others looking for a place to exercise in inclement weather, they said.

There would be between 60 to 70 parking spaces on the site. Parking at or near the arena should be sufficient "90 percent of the time," Reardon said, but he and Myhr acknowledged that parking for major events, which could require 500 to 600 spaces, could be difficult at first and people attending those events may have to walk a few blocks to get to the arena.

However, they said there would be sufficient parking in the adjacent Recreation Center lot and in other lots and ramps in the blocks to the east in downtown.

Burger noted that parking currently is sufficient for Waterloo Community Playhouse productions in the Rec Center, and those are not expected to conflict with events in the new ice arena. He also said a good amount of on-street parking is available.

Eventually, more nearby properties could be made available for parking, Burger said. He indicated that some of the city's financial commitment may come from the purchase of additional properties for parking, as they become available.

The arena also would be designed for future expansion and could eventually be developed into a full-scale sports complex with basketball courts and other recreation facilities, an idea talked about here for many years.

The on-again, off-again discussion of a new ice facility, which has been considered in a number of sites, resurfaced this past fall but stalled when the city backed off locating it in the block bordered by West Sixth, West Seventh, Jefferson and Bluff streets because of possible condemnation of businesses at the site.

Metro-area businessman and developer Rick Young said some plans for

locating the facility on the site, which is owned by his family near the Rec Center, had been done three or four years ago and were considered again as a solution to the impasse.

He said his family has donated the site and the capital necessary to build the arena to the Waterloo Civic Foundation. Once the necessary commitments from the ice users and the city are made, the project can proceed.

Young Development Co. will be the general contractor for the project. When completed, the land and the arena will be turned over to the city. "The city ends up getting the facility at about 20 cents on the dollar," Young said.

"The Young family's gift is the largest single gift ever made to the city of Waterloo," Myhr said. "What a stimulus this is for new development, at a time when the city needs a few."

Young said the donation is a desire of his parents, Dick H. and Immy Young, and his aunts and uncles — Edith Young and the late Robert A. Young, who was instrumental in getting hockey and ice programs at McElroy under way and earlier explored an ice arena on the family's property; John B. and Marjorie Young; and Margaret Young Langlas and the late William Langlas.

No formal name has been given to the arena yet. "It'll probably be the Young Arena. We don't know," Rick Young said. "The idea was, it was kind of a 'thank you' to Waterloo from the Youngs and a tribute to their father (and) my grandfather (John A. Young)."

The rink's location is where the Young family in the 1880s began an ice company, cutting ice from the Cedar River. The family also became involved in coal, lumber and, currently, plumbing and heating businesses.

"I think they felt it was a nice project for Waterloo, something that would be used for a long time," Rick Young said. "And I guess there's some obligation to pay back the city or to donate to the city," an obligation Young said was instilled in his family through the generations.

"When you raise your family here and make your money here, then you owe the community something. I think it's a chance for them to pay it back and thank the community."



Rick Young